

Claims.

1. A composition for use in a purgative, the composition comprising:
 - (i) at least one water-soluble sodium salt;
 - (ii) at least one water-soluble minimally degradable sugar in an amount, by weight, of from about 1 to about 3 times the weight of sodium ions in said composition;
 - 5 (iii) at least one water-soluble potassium salt in an amount, by weight, of from about 0.05 to about 1 times the weight of said sodium salt in said composition; and
 - (v) at least one water-soluble magnesium salt, wherein the weight of magnesium ions in said composition is from about 0.1 to about 10 times the weight of sodium ions in said composition.
- 10 2. The composition of claim 1, wherein the minimally degradable sugar is selected from the group consisting of xylose, xylotriose, xylooligosaccharides, fructooligosaccharides, fructosans, galactooligosaccharides, other oligosaccharides, and mixtures thereof.
3. The composition of claim 1, wherein the water-soluble sodium salt is selected
15 from the group consisting of sodium chloride, sodium gluconate, sodium citrate, sodium aspartate and mixtures thereof.
4. The composition of claim 1, wherein the water-soluble potassium salt is selected from the group consisting of potassium chloride and potassium tartrate.
5. The composition of claim 1, wherein the water-soluble magnesium salt is
20 selected from the group consisting of magnesium sulfate, magnesium citrate and magnesium phosphate.
6. The composition of claim 1 further comprising at least one additive selected from the group consisting of a flavouring ingredient, a detergent stool-softening agent, citrate, lactate, acetate, trace elements and nutritional elements.
- 25 7. The composition of claim 1 in the form of a soup or soup-like composition, tablet, gel cap, capsule or sachet.
8. A purgative, comprising a hypertonic aqueous solution of the composition of claim 1.
9. The purgative of claim 8 in the form of a unit dose having a volume of from
30 about 0.2 to 0.5L and wherein the sodium salt or salts are present in an amount from about 1 to about 10g per unit dose, the minimally degradable sugar or sugars in an amount of from about 2 to about 20g, the potassium salt or salts in an amount of from about 0.5 to about 5g, and the magnesium salt or salts in an amount of from about 1 to about 10g per unit dose of the purgative.

10. A method of inducing purgation of the colon of a patient in need thereof, comprising administering to said patient a composition of claim 1 or a purgative of claim 10 in an amount effective to induce purgation of the patient's colon.
11. The use of a composition of claim 1 for the manufacture of a purgative for inducing purgation of the colon.
12. A method for the treatment or prevention of one or more of a member selected from the group consisting of lavage-associated hyponatremia, hypoosmolality, nausea, malaise, vomiting, headache and convulsions, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment a composition of claim 1 or a purgative of claim 8.
13. Use of a composition of claim 1 for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of one or more of a member selected from the group consisting of lavage-associated hyponatremia, hypoosmolality, nausea, malaise, vomiting, headache and convulsions.
14. A method for the treatment or prevention of acute gastrointestinal infections, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment a composition of claim 1 or a purgative of claim 8.
15. Use of a composition of claim 1 for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of acute gastrointestinal infections.
16. A method for the treatment or prevention of constipation, acute constipation, chronic constipation or constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment a composition of claim 1 or a purgative of claim 8.
17. Use of a composition of claim 1 for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of constipation, acute constipation, chronic constipation or constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome.
18. The composition of claim 1 or the purgative of claim 8 when used in pre-colonoscopy or pre-surgical lavage, as a simple purgative, as electrolyte replacement lavage, as a barium enema preparation, in CT "virtual colonoscopy", in radiological applications, as electrolyte replacement lavage solutions, as electrolyte replacement lavage solutions for acute gastrointestinal infections, for symptomatic treatment in patients suffering from acute or chronic constipation or related symptoms or constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome, as a regular laxative, or for the treatment or prevention of lavage-associated hyponatremia, hypoosmolality, nausea, malaise, vomiting, headache or convulsions.
19. A composition for use in a purgative, the composition comprising:

- (i) at least one water-soluble sodium salt;
- (ii) at least one water-soluble degradable sugar in an amount, by weight, of from about 1 to about 3 times the weight of sodium ions in said composition;
- (iii) at least one water-soluble potassium salt in an amount, by weight, of
5 from about 0.05 to about 1 times the weight of said sodium salt in said composition; and
- (vi) at least one water-soluble magnesium salt, wherein the weight of magnesium ions in said composition is from about 0.1 to about 10 times the weight of sodium ions in said composition.

20. A composition of claim 19 wherein the degradable sugar is selected from the
10 group consisting of glucose, L-glucose, sucrose, fructose, galactose, lactose, mannitol and lactulose.

21. A purgative, comprising a hypertonic aqueous solution of the composition of claim 19.

22. A method of inducing purgation of the colon of a patient in need thereof,
15 comprising administering to said patient in the absence of diathermy a composition of claim 19 or a purgative of claim 21 in an amount effective to induce purgation of the patient's colon.

22. The use of a composition of claim 19 for the manufacture of a purgative for inducing purgation of the colon in the absence of diathermy.

20 23. A method for the treatment or prevention of one or more of a member selected from the group consisting of lavage-associated hyponatremia, hypoosmolality, nausea, malaise, vomiting, headache and convulsions, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment in the absence of diathermy a composition of claim 19 or a purgative of claim 21.

25 24. Use of a composition of claim 19 for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention in the absence of diathermy of one or more of a member selected from the group consisting of lavage-associated hyponatremia, hypoosmolality, nausea, malaise, vomiting, headache and convulsions.

30 25. A method for the treatment or prevention of acute gastrointestinal infections, comprising administering to a patient in need of such treatment in the absence of diathermy a composition of claim 19 or a purgative of claim 21.

26. Use of a composition of claim 19 for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of acute gastrointestinal infections in the absence of diathermy.

35 27. A method for the treatment or prevention of constipation, acute constipation, chronic constipation or constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome, comprising

administering to a patient in need of such treatment in the absence of diathermy a composition of claim 19 or a purgative of claim 21.

28. Use of a composition of claim 19 for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment or prevention of constipation, acute constipation, chronic constipation or
5 constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome in the absence of diathermy.

29. The composition of claim 19 or the purgative of claim 21 when used in the absence of diathermy in pre-colonoscopy or pre-surgical lavage, as a simple purgative, as electrolyte replacement lavage, as a barium enema preparation, in CT "virtual colonoscopy", in radiological applications, as electrolyte replacement lavage solutions, as
10 electrolyte replacement lavage solutions for acute gastrointestinal infections, for symptomatic treatment in patients suffering from acute or chronic constipation or related symptoms or constipation predominant irritable bowel syndrome, as a regular laxative, or for the treatment or prevention of lavage-associated hyponatremia, hypoosmolality, nausea, malaise, vomiting, headache or convulsions.